

Consumer Product Safety

The Problem for Consumers

Consumers trust that the products they bring into their homes – from kitchen appliances to toys to personal electronics – are tested to be safe. They also expect companies to act quickly and responsibly to remove products from the store shelves and online listings if there are safety concerns.

Unfortunately, today's marketplace often falls short of these reasonable expectations, putting people at serious risk.

In 2023, U.S. emergency departments treated 12.7 million injuries linked to consumer products.ⁱ According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there were an estimated 49,000 product-related deaths and 34 million injuries annually between 2018 and 2020.ⁱⁱ These outcomes reflect systemic shortcomings in how consumer products are regulated and monitored in the U.S.

Consumers expect that consumer products sold in the marketplace meet a minimum level of safety. A nationally representative CR survey conducted in September 2023 found that 99% of Americans expect manufacturers to design and test products for safety before selling them.ⁱⁱⁱ A major contributor to this disconnect is the lack of mandatory safety standards for most consumer products sold in the U.S. Many safety standards are voluntary, leaving it up to individual manufacturers to decide whether to comply. Further, companies can introduce new consumer products to the marketplace without prior review for safety risks, and long before safety regulations catch up.

The CPSC, the independent federal agency responsible for overseeing the safety of more than 15,000 types of consumer products,^{iv} faces significant constraints. Despite its broad mission, the agency is under-resourced and subject to proposed budget cuts that would further limit its capacity to set strong safety standards, investigate hazards, issue recalls, and hold companies accountable for violations.

The Policy Opportunity

The harms caused by hazardous or defective consumer products are preventable. Strong, mandatory safety standards, combined with effective enforcement, could significantly reduce injuries and deaths. While federal action remains essential, state and local legislators also have the tools and authority to protect their communities from dangerous consumer products. Under the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA), state attorneys general (AGs) have the authority to initiate legal actions to stop the sale of unsafe products and seek monetary penalties for violations. State AGs can also work with the CPSC to address specific product safety issues, like recalls, and pursue legal action under their own state consumer protection laws.^v Several states and cities have already taken important steps to close gaps in federal oversight and improve product safety:

- **Crib Bumpers:** Before the federal Safe Sleep for Babies Act was passed, banning padded crib bumpers linked to infant suffocation, states including Maryland, Ohio, and New York, as well as the city of Chicago, acted to prohibit their sale.
- **Lithium-Ion Battery & Micromobility Safety:** In response to rising deaths and injuries, New York City passed a 2023 ordinance requiring micromobility devices (e.g., e-bikes, e-scooters, hoverboards) and their lithium-ion batteries to meet stringent safety standards before being sold or rented.

- **Upholstered Furniture Flammability:** California implemented a state flammability standard for upholstered furniture in 2013 to reduce the risk of fires, which the CPSC adopted as federal rule in 2021.
- **Transparency in Litigation:** In 2022, CR supported California's Public Right to Know Act, a bill designed to ensure that information about public hazards—such as defective products—discovered in litigation would not be hidden from the public. Such transparency laws are essential for an informed public and responsive government.

Consumer Reports' Positions

Consumer Reports supports a stronger, more responsive consumer product safety system—both at the federal and state level. Our key policy positions include:

- **Strengthening the CPSC:** CR advocates for sustained, robust funding and continued independence for the CPSC to allow the agency to carry out its mission effectively. We also urge Congress to remove the statutory cap on civil penalties and give the CPSC authority to impose fines that meaningfully deter corporate wrongdoing.
- **Modernizing Federal Product Safety Laws:** CR supports legislative reforms to update and strengthen the CPSA, ensuring it reflects current technologies, products, and risks.
- **Boosting State Engagement:** We strongly support state and local efforts that would help address serious product hazards putting people at unreasonable risk of harm. CR supports increased collaboration between state AGs and the CPSC, and expanded use of state consumer protection laws to hold companies accountable for putting the public at risk.

For more information on our work on product safety, please contact Gabe Knight at gabe.knight@consumer.org and Oriene Shin at oriene.shin@consumer.org.

ⁱ National Safety Council, "Consumer Product Injuries," www.injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/consumer-product-injuries/. (last accessed Jul. 30, 2025)

ⁱⁱ CPSC, "Consumer Product-Related Injuries and Deaths in the United States: Estimated Injuries Occurring in 202 and Estimated Deaths Occurring in 2019," www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/ConsumerProductRelatedInjuriesandDeathsInTheUnitedStates.pdf?VersionId=bPIYVZJhOwvBRyFm2vIm0Q36tN7P0AKm (Sept. 2019)

ⁱⁱⁱ Consumer Reports, "September 2023 American Experiences Survey," www.article.images.consumerreports.org/image/upload/v1696262259/prod/content/dam/surveys/Consumer_Reports_AES_Toplines_September_2023.pdf. (Sept. 2023)

^{iv} CPSC, "Guide to Public Information," www.cpsc.gov/Newsroom/FOIA/Guide-to-Public-Information. (last accessed Jul. 30, 2025).

^v CPSC, "State Attorney General Enforcement under the CPSA," www.cpsc.gov/Stateag. (last accessed Jul. 30, 2025).

About Consumer Reports

Founded in 1936, CR is on a mission to create a fair and just marketplace for all. Widely known for our rigorous research and testing of products and services, we also survey millions of consumers each year, report extensively on marketplace issues, and advocate for consumer rights and protections around safety, digital rights, financial fairness, and sustainability. CR is independent and nonprofit.